

## **Dealing with incidents and accidents**

Pilots sometimes have mishaps resulting in injury (i.e. accidents). At such times it is important for all pilots on site to act sensibly and calmly to ensure the best possible outcome for the injured person. Other incidents also occur from time to time. An incident is an occurrence associated with the operation of an aircraft in which safety has been compromised, though no mishap actually occurred. In both cases it is important that the required steps are taken to notify the correct authorities so that the appropriate level of investigation can be carried out to help prevent future occurrences.

### **Accident management**

Most often there will be a coach or an instructor on the site, and they will take charge of the situation. If no such person is present, then someone, preferably an experienced pilot, must take charge. Having a single person in charge prevents confusion and enables the problem to be tackled quickly. It also prevents multiple calls to the emergency services.

You can expect the person in charge to check for any danger to would-be rescuers, and then to request volunteers to help with a variety of tasks. These will include administering first aid, and contacting the emergency services and ensuring that they are directed to the site. If a rescue helicopter is likely to be sent, then the 'All land' signal (a large 'H') needs to be set out to get other pilots out of the sky.

### **Dealing with serious accidents**

If the accident is of a serious nature (i.e. a serious or fatal injury has occurred), then somebody should be deputised to help any later investigation by recording the scene, using photos, notepad and pencil, video, or whatever means is available. (This can be extremely unpleasant, but is essential to the investigation process.) The aircraft must not be moved except to free trapped persons or animals or to avoid danger to the public. The names and addresses of all witnesses should be obtained, and ideally they should be asked to write down what they saw there and then, before talking to other people clouds their recollection.

### **Reporting an accident or incident**

It is a legal requirement that any accident involving an aircraft ('boarded with the intention of flight') must be reported to the police and the Air Accident Investigation Branch (AAIB) of the Department for Transport by the quickest available means. The AAIB and BHPA have an agreement that the BHPA will investigate hang gliding and paragliding accidents, so your legal duty is fulfilled by informing the police and the BHPA by the quickest available means. By reporting it to the BHPA you also satisfy the Association's requirements and those of the insurers.

### **In serious cases the BHPA technical staff must be informed immediately.**

(Serious cases include unusual equipment failures as well as accidents resulting in serious injury.) Contact telephone numbers are published in Skywings and are given on the BHPA office answerphone.

The BHPA accident-reporting system is a vital link in the chain of accident prevention. Without faithful reporting of accidents and incidents, we would lack the essential information needed to discover the causes of accidents, to identify trends, and to take action to put things right, nor would it be possible to continue to improve

the safety record. It is up to every pilot to report any accident which they are involved in – or have witnessed – and every incident that might have led to an accident. This is especially true of airworthiness problems.

### **Incident Report Form**

The BHPA has an on-line Incident Report Form (IRF) which is part of a pan-European system hosted by the European Hang Gliding and Paragliding Union (EHPU). This ensures that safety data is shared and that sufficient data is collected to make analysis meaningful. All types of incident and accident should be reported using this system. Serious incidents need to be reported asap – but in all cases the accident should be reported (on-line form submitted) within 48 hours. To make a report, follow the link from the BHPA website Documents/Safety section. Please complete it as thoroughly as possible, as a great deal can often be learned from what may at the time appear to be an unimportant detail. Never assume that someone else will send one in. It is much better that the same accident is reported several times than not at all.